FEAR

HERE ARE TALES THAT WILL USHER YOU INTO

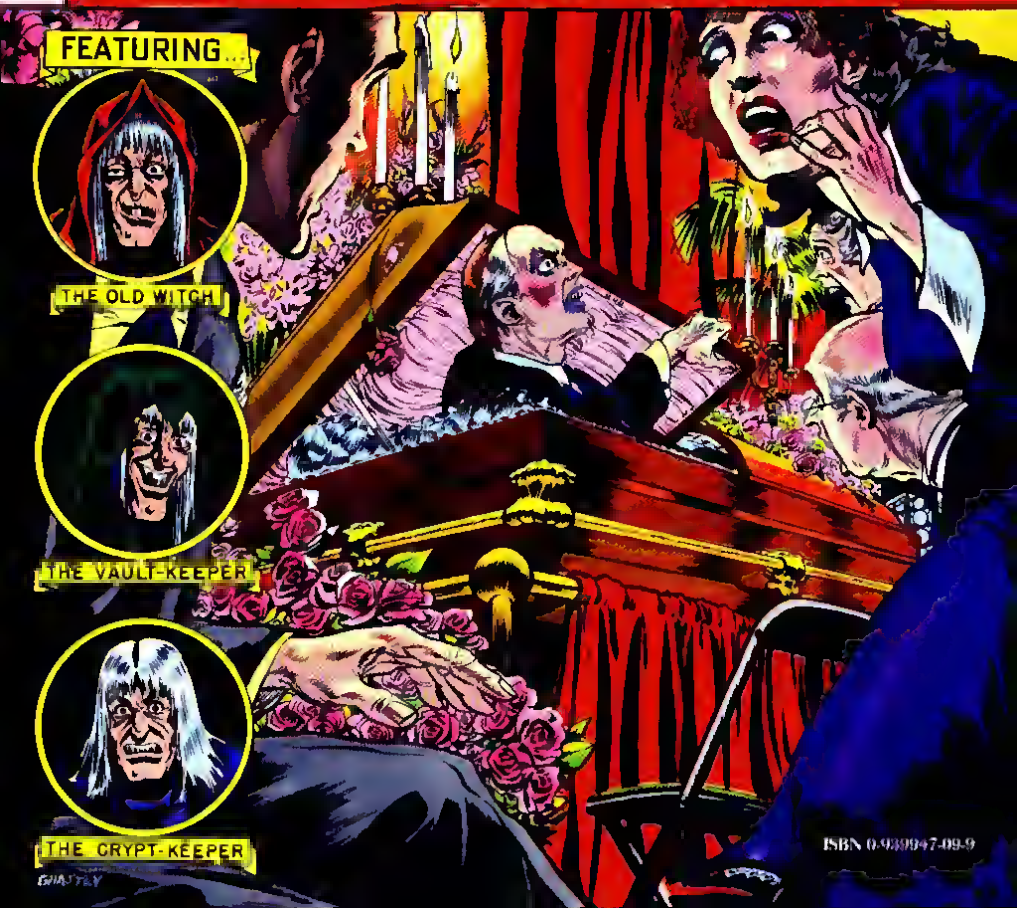
THE HAUNT OF FEAR

AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

NO. 15
OCT

AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

REPRINT EDITION



ISBN 0-930094-09-9

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE,HEE! CAN'T *RESIST* ME, EH? LOVE MY *COOKING*, EH? WELL, COME ON INTO *THE HAUNT OF FEAR* AGAIN, AND I'LL WHIP UP ANOTHER *MAD-MAG-RECIPE* IN MY *CAULDRON!* YEP! IT'S THE *OLD WITCH*, YOUR *REEKING RESTAURATEUR* OF THE *REVOLTING*...YOUR *MACABRE MENU-MAKER*...YOUR *SNIVER-CHEF*...*CREEPS-COOKER*, *MADNESS-MIXER*...*SCREAM-STEWER*...AND SO FORTH! SO FASTEN YOUR *DROOL CUPS* FOR ANOTHER SERVING OF *SNEER NORROR*, AND I'LL BEGIN THE *TASTY TALE* I CALL...

CHATTER-BOXED!

IT WAS A BRISK DAY IN NOVEMBER, 1941! THE MAN LAY SPRAWLED ON THE COLD SIDEWALK WHERE HE HAD FALLEN! HIS FACE WAS ASHEN-WHITE...HIS LIPS, BLUE! THE CROWD AROUND HIM FORMED QUICKLY... ANXIOUS EYES PEERED DOWN AT HIM...

WHAT *HAPPENED?*

HE JUST *KEELED OVER!*

SOMEBODY GET AN *AMBULANCE!*

HE HE LOOKS *DEAD!*

SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, AN AMBULANCE, ITS SIREN SCREAMING, PULLED UP TO THE CURB BESIDE THE PROSTRATE FIGURE...

ONE SIDE! LET ME THROUGH!

ALL RIGHT! BACK UP! GIVE HIM AIR!

THE WHITE-COATED AMBULANCE DOCTOR KNELT OVER THE MAN LYING ON THE GRAY SIDEWALK! HE LISTENED WITH HIS STETHOSCOPE... FELT FOR A PULSE... THEN SHOOK HIS HEAD...

THIS MAN IS DEAD!

IT WAS AN *HOUR* LATER THAT EILEEN FILBURT FINALLY SAID GOOD-BYE TO HER FRIEND SADIE! THEY'D BEEN AT IT, TALKING, FOR EVEN *LONGER* THAN *THAT!* AS SOON AS SHE HUNG UP...

HUM? OH, DEAR! *ANOTHER* CALL! AND I HAVE *SO* MUCH TO DO!

YES! THIS IS MRS. FILBURT!

WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU FOR AN HOUR, MRS. FILBURT! YOUR LINE WAS BUSY!

OH! I WAS *CHATTING* WITH A *GIRL FRIEND!* WHO *IS* THIS?

THIS IS THE *MORGUE* CALLING, MRS. FILBURT! YOU'D BETTER *BRACE* YOURSELF! THEY BROUGHT YOUR *HUSBAND'S BODY* IN HERE A WHILE AGO! HE'S... *DEAD!*

A HUSH FELL OVER THE PEOPLE SEATED IN THE FUNERAL PARLOR'S CHAPEL! THE COFFIN LID WAS OPENED! THE VOICE OF THE ORATOR BEGAN TO DRONE! JACOB FILBURT'S FUNERAL SERVICES HAD BEGUN...

AND SO... IN FINAL PEACE... JACOB FILBURT'S REMAINS WILL BE LAID TO REST! BUT HE LEAVES BEHIND THE LOVE... THE DEVOTION... THE KINDNESS HE PRACTICED WHILE HE LIVED...

THE FUNERAL ORATOR'S VOICE DRONED ON AND ON, INTERRUPTED ONLY BY THE PITIFUL SOBS OF THE MOURNERS BEFORE HIM! SUDDENLY, A SHRIEK ECHOED THROUGH THE FUNERAL CHAPEL...

EEEEAAAH!

SHEER HORROR GRIPPED THE MOURNING GATHERING! ALL EYES STARED AT THE OPEN COFFIN! A WHITE VEINED HAND REACHED UP, GRASPING THE COFFIN LID...

AND AS JACOB FILBURT SAT UP, THE CHAPEL WAS FILLED WITH CRIES OF TERROR! WOMEN MOURNERS, TRIPPING ON THEIR BLACK DRESSES, SCRAMBLED FOR THE EXITS! MEN PUSHED AFTER THEM! A GIRL FELL, SCREAMING, AND THE OTHERS TRAMPLED OVER HER...

YAAAAAAAAAAGGHHH!

SOME, ROOTED WITH MORTAL FEAR TO THE SPOT WHERE THEY STOOD, JUST STARED AT THE PALE FIGURE RISING IN HIS COFFIN! SUDDENLY, JACOB'S EYES BLINKED OPEN! COLOR RUSHED TO HIS CHEEKS! HE LOOKED AROUND..

WHA... WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

GOOD LORD! HE'S ALIVE!

THE DOCTOR STROKED HIS CHIN THOUGHTFULLY! JACOB FILBURT HUNG HIS HEAD...

YOU SUFFERED WHAT IS COMMONLY CALLED A *CATALEPTIC FIT* MR. FILBERT! CATALEPTIC FITS *CLOSELY RESEMBLE DEATH!*

BUT DOCTOR! I MIGHT HAVE BEEN *BURIED ALIVE!*

DOCTOR! *TELEPHONE!* MRS. CONDRIAK!

JACOB FILBURT'S FAMILY PHYSICIAN, DOCTOR HENLEY BENDINERE, PICKED UP THE PHONE...

EXCUSE ME, FILBURT! OH, YES, MRS. CONDRIAK! IS THAT SO? IS *THAT* SO? *NO?!* HMMM! OH, DEAR! *REALLY!* WELL, I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU SHOULD DO! TAKE A POT AND BOIL UP...

TEN MINUTES LATER..

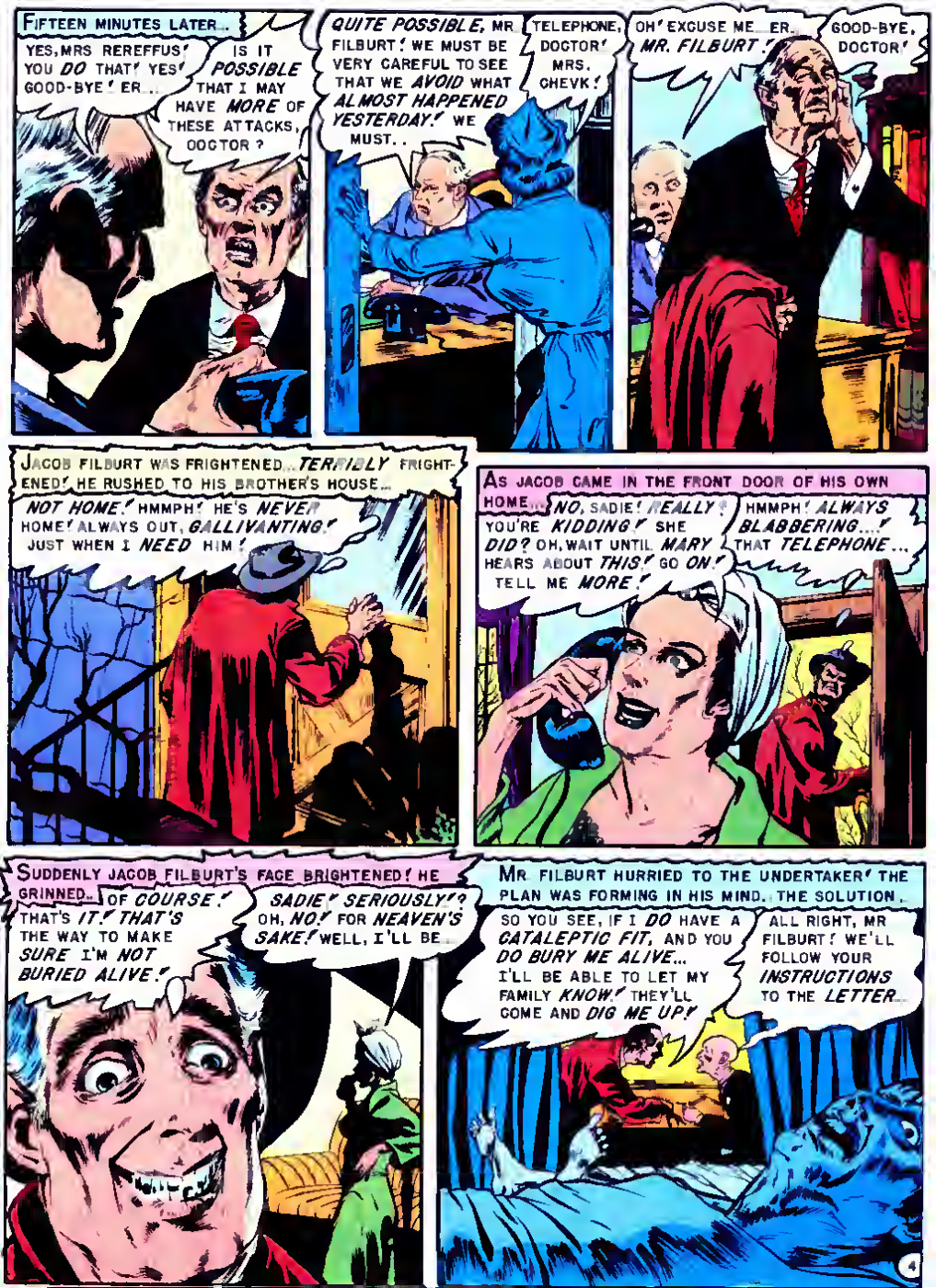
GOOD-BYE, MRS. CONDRIAK! ER. WHERE *WERE* WE, FILBURT?

I WAS SAYING, I COULD'VE BEEN *BURIED ALIVE!*

YES! NO TELLING HOW *LONG* A CATALEPTIC FIT WILL *LAST!* AND IT IS RARE THAT A PHYSICIAN CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *IT* AND *ACTUAL DEATH!* NOW...

TELEPHONE, DOCTOR! MRS. RERERFUS!

OH, EXCUSE ME, FILBURT!


FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER...
YES, MRS REREFFUS! YOU DO THAT! YES! GOOD-BYE! ER...
IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I MAY HAVE MORE OF THESE ATTACKS, DOCTOR?
QUITE POSSIBLE, MR FILBURT! WE MUST BE VERY CAREFUL TO SEE THAT WE AVOID WHAT ALMOST HAPPENED YESTERDAY! WE MUST..
TELEPHONE, DOCTOR! MRS. GHEVK!
OH! EXCUSE ME... ER... MR. FILBURT!
GOOD-BYE, DOCTOR!
JACOB FILBURT WAS FRIGHTENED... TERRIBLY FRIGHTENED! HE RUSHED TO HIS BROTHER'S HOUSE...
NOT HOME! HMMPH! HE'S NEVER HOME! ALWAYS OUT, GALLIVANTING! JUST WHEN I NEED HIM!
AS JACOB CAME IN THE FRONT DOOR OF HIS OWN HOME...
NO, SADIE! REALLY? YOU'RE KIDDING! SHE DID? OH, WAIT UNTIL MARY HEARS ABOUT THIS! GO ON! TELL ME MORE!
HMMPH! ALWAYS BLABBERING...! THAT TELEPHONE...
SUDDENLY JACOB FILBURT'S FACE BRIGHTENED! HE GRINNED... OF COURSE! THAT'S IT! THAT'S THE WAY TO MAKE SURE I'M NOT BURIED ALIVE!
SADIE! SERIOUSLY!? OH, NO! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE! WELL, I'LL BE...
MR FILBURT HURRIED TO THE UNDERTAKER! THE PLAN WAS FORMING IN HIS MIND. THE SOLUTION.
SO YOU SEE, IF I DO HAVE A CATALEPTIC FIT, AND YOU DO BURY ME ALIVE... I'LL BE ABLE TO LET MY FAMILY KNOW! THEY'LL COME AND DIG ME UP!
ALL RIGHT, MR FILBURT! WE'LL FOLLOW YOUR INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LETTER...

THEN MR. FILBURT WENT TO HIS FAMILY DOCTOR AND TOLD HIM HIS PLAN...
EXCELLENT IDEA, FILBURT! IF YOU ARE BURIED ALIVE DURING YOUR CATALEPTIC FIT, YOU'LL CONSUME PRACTICALLY NONE OF THE AIR IN THE COFFIN! WHEN YOU COME OUT OF IT, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LAST LONG ENOUGH...
TELEPHONE, DOCTOR!
ER THANKS, DOC! 'BYE!
FINALLY, MR. FILBURT COMPLETED HIS ARRANGEMENTS...
I'LL PAY MY BILLS IN ADVANCE... EVERY MONTH! SATISFACTORY?
FINE! WE'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING, SIR! WOULD YOU LIKE TO PAY FOR DECEMBER NOW?
JACOB WENT OUT INTO THE CHILL NOVEMBER AIR FEELING CONFIDENT THAT HIS PROBLEM WAS SOLVED...
YES, SIREE! PERFECT! PERFECT!
WAIT FOR THE DIAL TONE!
EARLY THE NEXT MONTH, IT HAPPENED! A CAR CAREENED CRAZILY ACROSS A DESERTED STREET AND SMASHED INTO A BRICK WALL! THE IMPACT OF TONS OF STEEL AND SHATTERING GLASS ECHOED INTO THE NIGHT.
WHEN THE AMBULANCE DOCTOR EXAMINED THE UNFORTUNATE DRIVER...
THIS MAN IS DEAD!
THAT'S JACOB FILBURT! I RECOGNIZE HIM!
DOCTOR BENDINERE ASSURED MRS. FILBURT...
NO, MRS. FILBURT! HE'S DEAD ALL RIGHT! THE CRASH DID IT! IT'S DEFINITELY NOT A CATALEPTIC FIT!
THEN... SOB... I SUPPOSE WE... SOB... MIGHT AS WELL GO AHEAD... SOB... WITH THE FUNERAL!
THE UNDERTAKER, HOWEVER, INSISTED THAT HE FOLLOW MR. FILBURT'S INSTRUCTIONS...
THAT'S THE ARRANGEMENT, MRS. FILBURT! YOUR HUSBAND DEMANDED IT! I'M GOING TO SEE THAT IT'S CARRIED OUT! NO EMBALMING!
BUT REALLY, MR. BOXER! THE OTHER THING! ISN'T THAT A LITTLE RIDICULOUS? BURY JACOB WITH A CONNECTED TELEPHONE?
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HEE, HEE! YEP, KIDDIES! THAT'S THE DEAL! *THAT'S* WHAT POOR OLD JACOB FILBURT *ARRANGED* WITH THE UNDERTAKER AND THE TELEPHONE COMPANY.. THAT HE BE BURIED *WITHOUT* BEING *EMBALMED*, ALONG WITH A *CONNECTED TELEPHONE* IN HIS *COFFIN*! NOW, NOW! LET'S NOT START *GUESSING* HOW MY LITTLE TALE ENDS! C'MON! LET'S READ ON...

AND SO ON THAT COLD SATURDAY IN EARLY DECEMBER, JACOB FILBURT'S COFFIN WAS LOWERED INTO THE GRAVE...

SOB SOB

SILENCE CLOSED IN AS THE MOURNERS LEFT AND THE GRAVE WAS COVERED OVER! THE THIN TELEPHONE WIRE COMING FROM THE FRESH MOUND OF CEMETERY EARTH SWAYED IN THE WINTRY WIND...

NIGHT CREPT OVER THE GRAY HEADSTONES LIKE A BLACK PHANTOM! ALL WAS STILL.. EXCEPT FOR THE WHINE OF THE WIND STREAMING PAST THE WIRE! THEN CAME DAWN! TOWARDS AFTERNOON...

FOR JACOB FILBURT *HAD* HAD A CATALEPTIC FIT! HE'D SUFFERED IT WHILE DRIVING! THAT'S WHY HE CRASHED! BUT THE CRASH HADN'T KILLED HIM! HE WAS ALIVE.. *BURIED ALIVE*...

YAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHH!

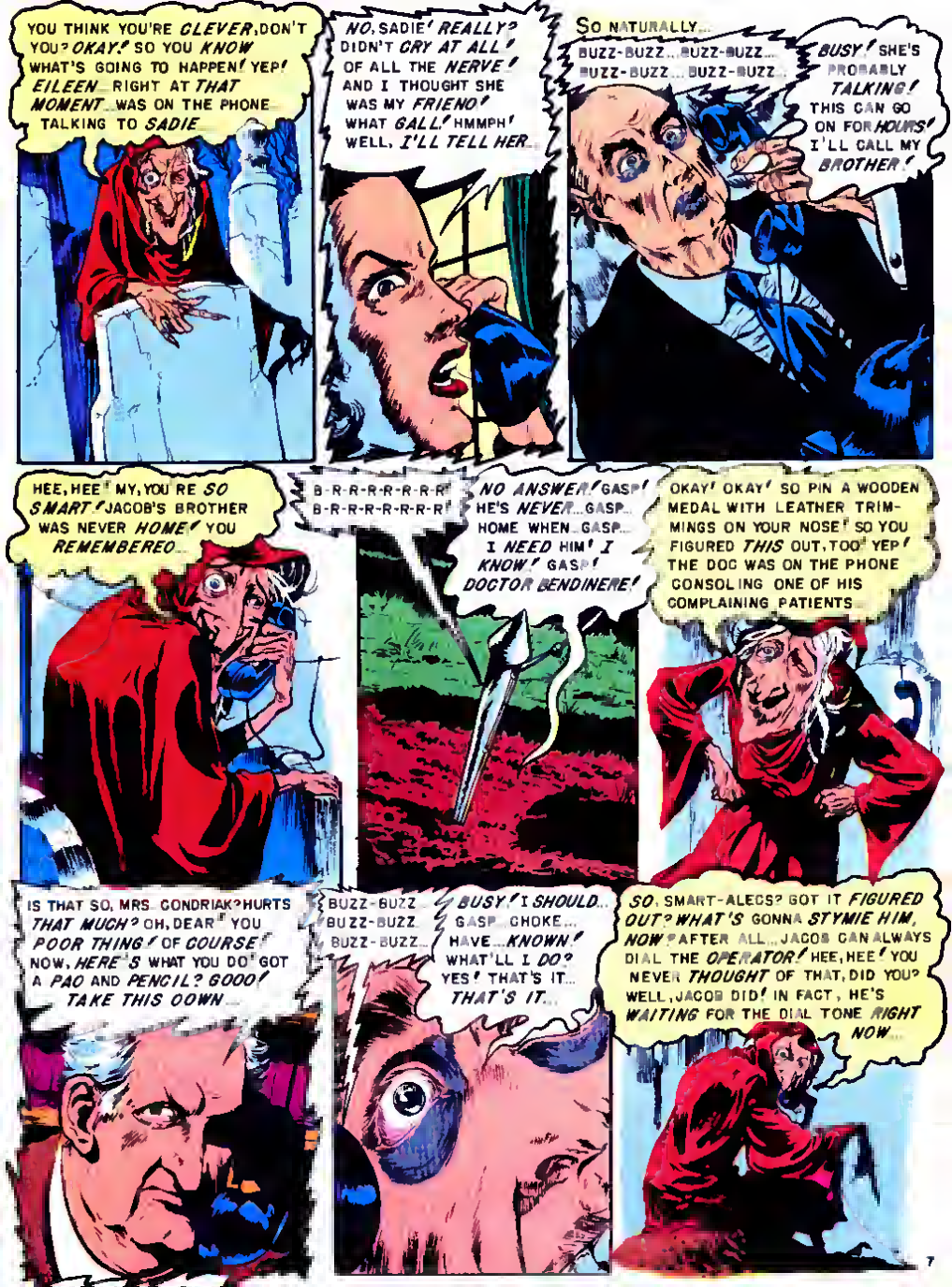
HELP! HELP ME... SOMEONE!

AND THEN JACOB FELT IT, BESIDE HIM! THE COLD BLACK INSTRUMENT! THE *TELEPHONE*...

OH... *THANK HEAVENS!* THANK HEAVENS THEY *REMEMBERED!*

JACOB LIFTED THE RECEIVER! THE DIAL TONE BEGAN TO HUM! HE COUNTED THE LITTLE HOLES CAREFULLY TO MAKE SURE HE'D DIAL THE RIGHT NUMBER...

MY WIFE, *EILEEN*! I'LL CALL *HER*! SHE'LL COME AND *GET* ME! LET'S SEE! *F*... THAT'S THE *THIRD* HOLE! *R*... THAT'S THE *SEVENTH*! 8...2...5...6...9...


YOU THINK YOU'RE CLEVER, DON'T YOU? OKAY! SO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN! YEP! EILEEN... RIGHT AT THAT MOMENT... WAS ON THE PHONE TALKING TO SADIE...
NO, SADIE! REALLY? DIDN'T CRY AT ALL! OF ALL THE NERVE! AND I THOUGHT SHE WAS MY FRIEND! WHAT GALL! HMMPH! WELL, I'LL TELL HER...
SO NATURALLY...
BUZZ-BUZZ... BUZZ-BUZZ... BUZZ-BUZZ... BUZZ-BUZZ...
BUSY! SHE'S PROBABLY TALKING! THIS CAN GO ON FOR HOURS! I'LL CALL MY BROTHER!
HEE, HEE! MY, YOU'RE SO SMART! JACOB'S BROTHER WAS NEVER HOME! YOU REMEMBERED...
B-R-R-R-R-R-R-R! B-R-R-R-R-R-R-R!
NO ANSWER! GASP! HE'S NEVER... GASP... HOME WHEN... GASP... I NEED HIM! I KNOW! GASP! DOCTOR BENDINERE!
OKAY! OKAY! SO PIN A WOODEN MEDAL WITH LEATHER TRIMMINGS ON YOUR NOSE! SO YOU FIGURED THIS OUT, TOO? YEP! THE DOC WAS ON THE PHONE CONSOLING ONE OF HIS COMPLAINING PATIENTS...
IS THAT SO, MRS. CONDRIAK? HURTS THAT MUCH? OH, DEAR! YOU POOR THING! OF COURSE! NOW, HERE'S WHAT YOU DO! GOT A PAD AND PENCIL? GOOD! TAKE THIS DOWN...
BUZZ-BUZZ... BUZZ-BUZZ... BUZZ-BUZZ...
BUSY! I SHOULD... GASP... CHOKE... HAVE... KNOWN! WHAT'LL I DO? YES! THAT'S IT... THAT'S IT...
SO, SMART-ALECS? GOT IT FIGURED OUT? WHAT'S GONNA STYMIE HIM, NOW? AFTER ALL... JACOB CAN ALWAYS DIAL THE OPERATOR! HEE, HEE! YOU NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT, DID YOU? WELL, JACOB DID! IN FACT, HE'S WAITING FOR THE DIAL TONE RIGHT NOW...

BUT THE DIAL TONE DIDN'T COME! BECAUSE MINUTES BEFORE...THOUSANDS OF MILES WESTWARD...

LOOK! UP THERE!

PLANES! HUNDREDS OF THEM!

GODD LORD!

DEAD..BASP! ND DIAL TONE! THE PHONE IS DEAD! DPERATOR_GASP..DPERATOR... CHOKE...

NO, FIENDS! THE DIAL TONE *DIDN'T* COME! BECAUSE AT THAT MOMENT, THE NATION'S PHONE CENTERS WERE TIED UP WITH ARMY, NAVY, AND NEWSPAPER CALLS! THE WIRES WERE JAMMED! *ALL CIRCUITS WERE BUSY*...

PLEASE...GASP...CHOKE! NOT MUCH *AIR*...LEFT! *OPERATOR!* GASP...A *DIAL* TONE...SO I CAN... *PLEASE*...GASP...CHOKE..GASP...*DIAL THE OPERATOR*...GURGLE...

IN FACT, THE *AIR* IN JACOB'S COFFIN *GAVE OUT* LONG BEFORE THE LITTLE ORANGE LIGHT ON THE 'TROUBLE-SWITCHBOARD' INDICATED THAT A PHONE WAS OFF THE HOOK SOMEWHERE! SO THE SHRILL VOICE OF THE OPERATOR FELL ON *DEAF EARS* IN THAT DARK UNDERGROUND HORIZONTAL PHONE BOOTH...*FOR JACOB HAS SUFFOCATED*...

THIS IS THE OPERATOR! I'M SORRY! OUR CIRCUITS ARE BUSY! PLEASE HANG UP...

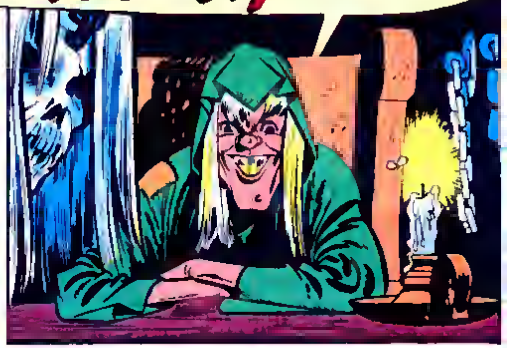
'*PLEASE* HANG UP!' *THE JAPANESE HAVE JUST BOMBED PEARL HARBOR!*

HEE HEE! YEP, KIDDIES! LIKE I *SAID* IN THE *BEGINNING*... IT WAS *1941!* THOUGHT YOU WERE PRETTY *SHREWD*, EH? THOUGHT YOU HAD IT *ALL FIGURED OUT?* WELL, I HOPE I OUTSMARTED YOU! AS FOR *JACOB*, WELL, *HE* AND HIS *TELEPHONE* ARE *PRETTY DECAYED* BY NOW! I STILL GET A *CALL* FROM HIM ONCE IN A WHILE, THOUGH! USUALLY, I'M NOT *HOME*...SO HE LEAVES A *SPIRT-MESSAGE!* AND NOW, THE *VAULT-KEEPER* AWAITS WITH *HIS* LITTLE NUMBER! *DIG* YOU *LATER!* GOT ANOTHER *GRIM FAIRY TALE* FOR YOU! 'BYE NOW!

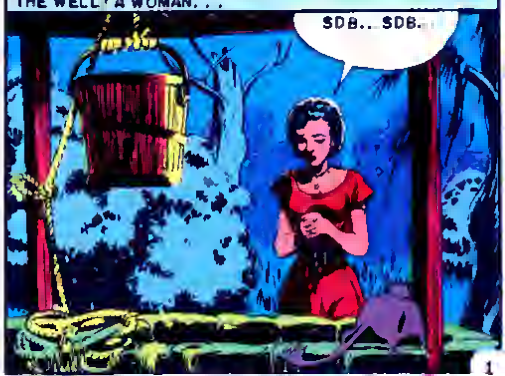
THE VAULT OF HORROR!

REMEMBER THE STORY ABOUT THE *THREE HOLES IN THE GROUND* CALLED *'WELL, WELL, WELL'?* HEH, HEH! NOW, YOUR *VAULT-KEEPER* BELIEVES IN *DEFLATION!* SO COME INTO THE *VAULT OF HORROR*, SIT YOURSELF DOWN ON THAT BUCKET, AND I'LL BEGIN THE TALE OF *ONE* HOLE IN THE GROUND CALLED...

all Washed Up!



IT WAS AN *OLD* WELL! NO ONE USED IT ANYMORE! THE WATER DEEP BELOW ITS SLIMY-WALLED SIDES SHIMMERED IN THE MOONLIGHT! A MUSTY ODOR OF STAGNATION AND STALENESS DRIFTED UP FROM THE BLACKNESS BENEATH ITS STONE RIM! THE MOSS-LADEN WATER BUCKET HUNG SILENTLY ON THE FRAYED ROPE COILED ABOUT THE WEATHERBEATEN HANDLE! INSECTS SWARMED BENEATH THE ROTTED SHED THAT STOOD OVER IT! A TWIG SNAPPED NEARBY! A FIGURE MOVED OUT OF THE DARKNESS...TOWARD THE WELL! A WOMAN...



SHE CAME UP TO THE WELL AND LEANED OVER IT! THE MOONLIGHT GLISTENED ON HER TEAR-STAINED CHEEKS! SHE LOOKED DOWN AT THE STAGNANT WATER FAR BELOW...

HOW LONG CAN WE GO *ON* LIKE THIS, HARRY? PEOPLE ARE *TALKING!* THEY SAY... SOB... THEY SAY YOU DON'T *INTEND* TO *MARRY ME!*

A SECOND FIGURE CAME OUT OF THE SHADOWS AND MOVED TO THE SIDE OF THE UNHAPPY WOMAN! A MAN...

THEY'RE *WRONG*, MARCIA! I *WANT* TO MARRY YOU! BUT I *CAN'T!* NOT *YET!* I'M NOT *READY!*

WHEN, HARRY? WHEN *WILL* YOU BE *READY?*

AS SOON AS I'VE SAVED UP ENOUGH *MONEY!* I'VE GOT A *JOB* NOW! IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I GET A *PROMOTION!* THEN..

YOU'VE PUT IT *OFF* AND PUT IT *OFF!* ALWAYS THE *SAME EXCUSE!* YOU HAVEN'T THE *MONEY!*

IT *ISN'T* AN *EXCUSE*, MARCIA! CAN'T YOU *UNDERSTAND?*

I UNDERSTAND *EVERY-THING*, HARRY! *PERFECTLY!* I'M SORRY YOU NEVER GAVE ME A *RING!* I WOULD *GIVE IT BACK... NOW!*

MARCIA!

WE'RE *FINISHED*, HARRY! I'M TIRED OF *WAITING!* GREGG CALLED ME TODAY! HE'S BACK IN *TOWN!* HE WANTS TO *SEE* ME! HE WANTS TO KNOW IF I'M ... *FREE*... OF *TIES!* I'M GOING TO TELL HIM... *YES!*

MARCIA! COME *BACK! WAIT!*

GOOD-BYE, HARRY! I'LL SEE YOU AROUND...

THE WOMAN DISAPPEARED INTO THE GLOOM! THE MAN STOOD... STARING INTO THE BLACKNESS WHERE SHE'D VANISHED! THE SILENCE CLOSED IN AGAIN! A BREEZE STIRRED THE WELL BUCKET! THE FRAYED ROPE CREAKED...

GREGG SANDERS! THAT *RICH NO-GOOD* @#**?! HE ALWAYS *WANTED* MARCIA! NOW HE'S GOING TO TAKE HER *AWAY* FROM ME!

MARCIA'S LAUGHTER RIPPLED THROUGH THE STILL NIGHT AIR! GREGG TOOK HER IN HIS ARMS...

GREGG! THESE LAST FEW WEEKS HAVE BEEN *WONDERFUL!* *JUST WONDERFUL!* I'VE LOVED *EVERY MINUTE* OF IT!

IT DOESN'T *HAVE* TO END, MARCIA! IT COULD GO *ON* AND *ON*... LIKE THIS... IF YOU'LL SAY *'YES'!*

MARCIA TURNED AWAY, STARING DOWN AT THE SHIMMERING WELL-WATER FAR BELOW...

ARE... ARE YOU *PROPOSING* TO ME, GREGG?

YES, MARCIA! I'M ASKING YOU TO *MARRY* ME! WHAT DO YOU SAY?

I'M NOT SURE I *LOVE* YOU, GREGG!

I'LL *MAKE* YOU LOVE ME, DEAREST! JUST GIVE ME THE *CHANCE*! SAY YOU'LL MARRY ME!

YES, GREGG! I'LL... *I'LL MARRY YOU!*

SWEETHEART!

HARRY CLENCHED HIS FISTS AND SWORE SILENTLY AS HE WATCHED FROM HIS HIDING PLACE...

I WON'T LET YOU *HAVE* HER, GREGG! I *WON'T!* SHE'S *MINE!* *MINE!*

MARCIA PULLED AWAY FROM GREGG! SHE SMILED...

I'VE GOT TO GO IN NOW, GREGG! IT'S LATE! CALL ME TOMORROW!

I WILL, HONEY! GOOD-NIGHT!

AFTER MARCIA WENT OFF DOWN THE PATH TOWARD HER HOUSE, GREGG LEANED OVER THE WELL AND GRINNED! HE WAS TOO BUSY WITH HIS OWN THOUGHTS TO HEAR THE CRACKLE OF THE LEAVES BEHIND HIM...

HARRY BROUGHT THE ROCK DOWN ON GREGG'S HEAD AGAIN AND AGAIN! SOON IT FELT AS IF HE WERE POUNDING AN OLD MOTH-EATEN PILLOW...

SHE'S *MINE*... UNNGGG... *MINE!* UNGGG! I *WON'T*... UGH... LET YOU... UNNGG... *HAVE HER!*

HARRY STARED DOWN AT GREGG'S LIFELESS BODY LYING BEFORE HIM! THEN, SOMETHING CAUGHT HIS EYE! SOMETHING *SPARKLING*...

HIS *DIAMOND RING!* IT... IT MUST BE WORTH A *FORTUNE*...

HARRY KNELT AND SLIPPED THE RING FROM GREGG'S FINGER...

I COULD *HOCK* IT! IT'D BE ENOUGH TO GET *MARRIED* ON!

HARRY PUSHED THE RING INTO HIS BREAST POCKET AND LIFTED GREGG'S BODY...

NOW TO GET *RID* OF YOU, GREGG... WHERE THEY'D *NEVER* THINK OF *LOOKING* FOR YOU...

HARRY PUSHED GREGG'S BODY OVER THE STONE RIM OF THE WELL! FOR A MOMENT, IT HUNG THERE... PRECARIOUSLY...

DOWN... YOU... GO...

THERE WAS A SECOND OR TWO OF SILENCE, AND THEN A MUFFLED SPLASH FAR BELOW! HARRY PEERED DOWN AT THE RIPPLING MURKY WATER! SUDDENLY...

GASP...

THE RING SPIRALED DOWNWARD CRAZILY! HARRY LUNGED FOR IT, ALMOST GOING OVER! IT WAS TOO LATE...

BLAST IT! *AWK...*

A LIGHT BLINKED ON IN MARCIA'S HOUSE! A WINDOW RATTLED OPEN! HARRY DUCKED INTO THE SHADOWS

WHO... *WHO'S THERE?*

SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, HARRY SLOWED DOWN TO A WALK, BREATHING HEAVILY! HE'D GOTTEN OUT OF THERE... *FAST*...

THAT ..GASP.. *RING!* I'VE GOT TO. GASP.. GO BACK AND...GASP... *GET IT!*

A WEEK PASSED! EACH NIGHT, UNDER THE COVER OF DARKNESS, HARRY WOULD RETURN TO THE WELL WITH SOME STRING AND FISH HOOKS! HOUR AFTER HOUR, HE'D DANGLE THE HOOKS INTO THE MURKY WATER...

IT'S *NO USE!* I CAN'T *LOCATE* IT!

SEVERAL TIMES DURING THOSE NIGHTS OF PROBING, THE HOOKS WOULD CATCH ONTO THE BODY BELOW, AND HARRY WOULD BE FORCED TO SNAP THE STRING AND BEGIN AGAIN...

BLAST IT! CAUGHT AGAIN!

ONCE, HARRY'D PULLED HARD, AND A BLOATED WHITENED HAND LIFTED UPWARD FROM THE MUDDY SURFACE...

GOOD LORD!

DURING THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED THE MURDER, HARRY WOULD VISIT MARCIA...TO COMFORT HER.

HE NEVER *INTENDED* TO MARRY YOU, MARCIA! CAN'T YOU *SEE* THAT NOW?

I...SOB...SUPPOSE YOU'RE *RIGHT*... SOB, HARRY!

AND AS THE WEEKS WENT BY..

OH, HARRY! I'VE BEEN SUCH A *FOOL!* CAN YOU *FORGIVE* ME?

FORGET ABOUT *HIM*, MARCIA! IT'S ALL *OVER!* LET'S PICK UP WHERE *WE* LEFT OFF!

MEANWHILE, HARRY CONTINUED TO FISH FOR GREGG'S RING WITH NO SUCCESS..

IT'S NO *USE!* THERE'S JUST *ONE ALTERNATIVE..*

AND SO, ABOUT TWO MONTHS AFTER THE MURDER.. ONE DARK NIGHT.. HARRY CAME TO THE WELL WITH A COIL OF STRONG ROPE...

IT'S THE *ONLY WAY!* I'VE GOT TO GO *DOWN* THERE AND *GET* IT!

HARRY SLIP THE ROPE AROUND ONE OF THE BEAMS THAT SUPPORTED THE WELL SHED AND TIED IT SECURELY...

THEN HE SLIPPED OVER THE STONE RIM OF THE WELL AND BEGAN TO LOWER HIMSELF, HAND UNDER HAND, DOWN INTO THE DARK MUSTY SHAFT.

PHEW! WHAT A SMELL!

THE STENCH OF THE STAGNANT WATER BELOW SEARED HARRY'S NOSTRILS! SOON HE REACHED ITS MURKY SURFACE

I HOPE IT'S NOT TOO DEEP!

THE WATER ROSE SLOWLY! IT HAD REACHED HARRY'S CHEST WHEN HIS FEET TOUCHED SOMETHING SOFT...

I...I'M STANDING ON THE...*BODY!*

HARRY TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND DUCKED BELOW THE SURFACE! HE REACHED DOWNWARD FOR THE RING...

IT *MUST* BE HERE... *SOMEWHERE...*

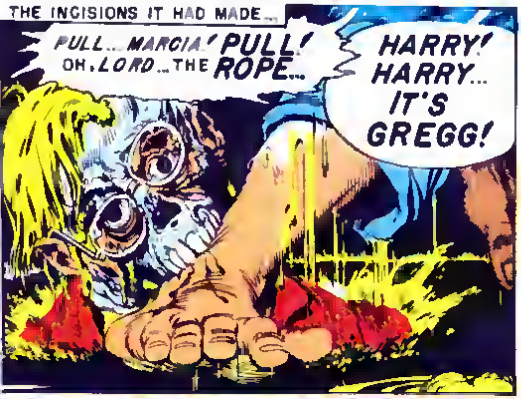
MARCIA SAT BOLT UPRIGHT IN HER BED AS THE HYSTERICAL SHRIEKING ECHOED THROUGH THE STILLNESS OF THE NIGHT...

SHE SLIPPED ON A ROBE, HURRIED DOWNSTAIRS AND OUT INTO THE DARKNESS...

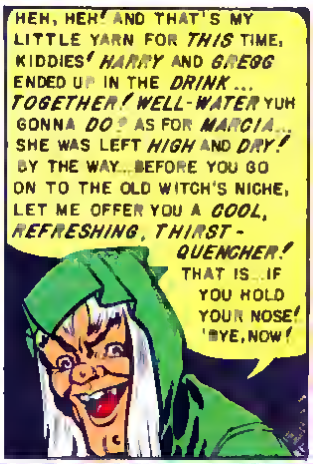
THE SPLASHING AND SCREAMING WERE INDEED COMING FROM THE WELL! MARCIA PEERED OVER THE EDGE! FAR BELOW, HARRY WAS TRYING TO PULL HIMSELF UPWARD..

MARCIA BEGAN TO PULL WITH ALL HER STRENGTH! HARRY CONTINUED TO SHRIEK! LITTLE BY LITTLE HE CAME OUT OF THE WATER! AND THEN SHE SAW IT...

THE ROTTED, BLOATED, WHITENED, GRINNING THING HAD CLOSED ITS TEETH AROUND HARRY'S ANKLE! IT HELD IT IN A VICE-LIKE GRIP! TRICKLES OF BLOOD RAN FROM THE INCISIONS IT HAD MADE...

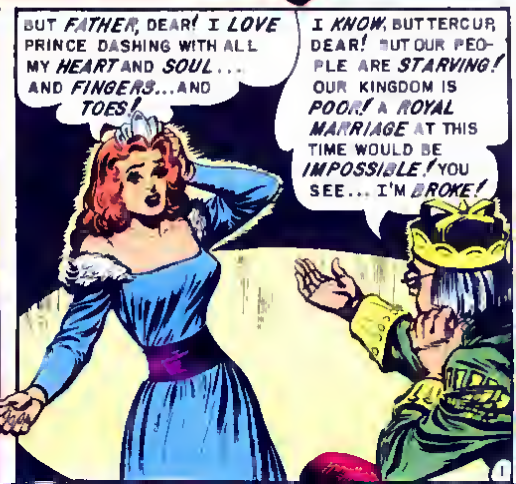


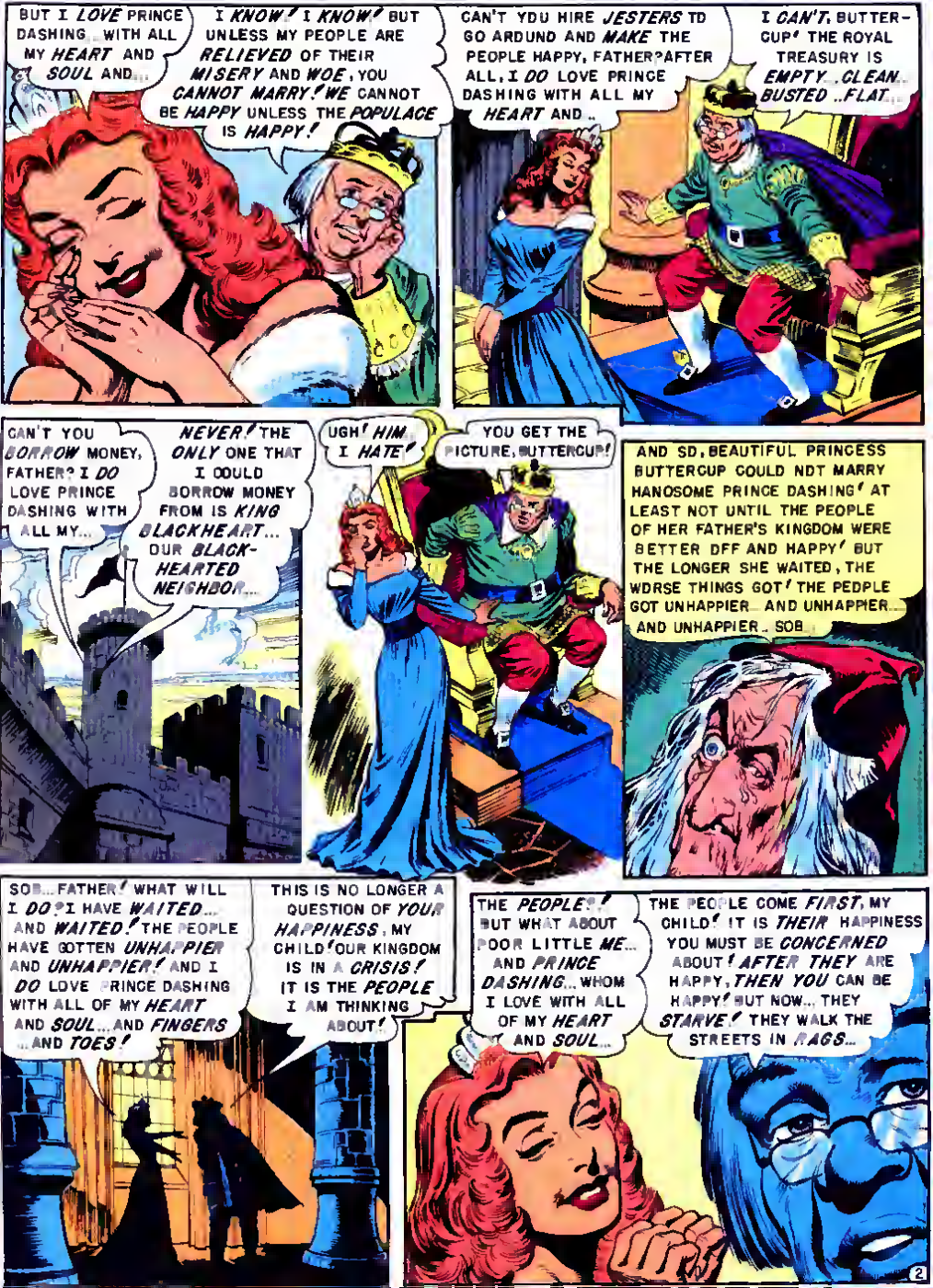
AND AS THE ROPE SNAPPED UNDER THE STRAIN, THE TWO OF THEM DISAPPEARED INTO THE DANK MURKY WATER! MARCIA STARED IN HORROR AS THE LAST FEW BUBBLES ROSE... AND BROKE ACROSS THE STAGNANT SURFACE...



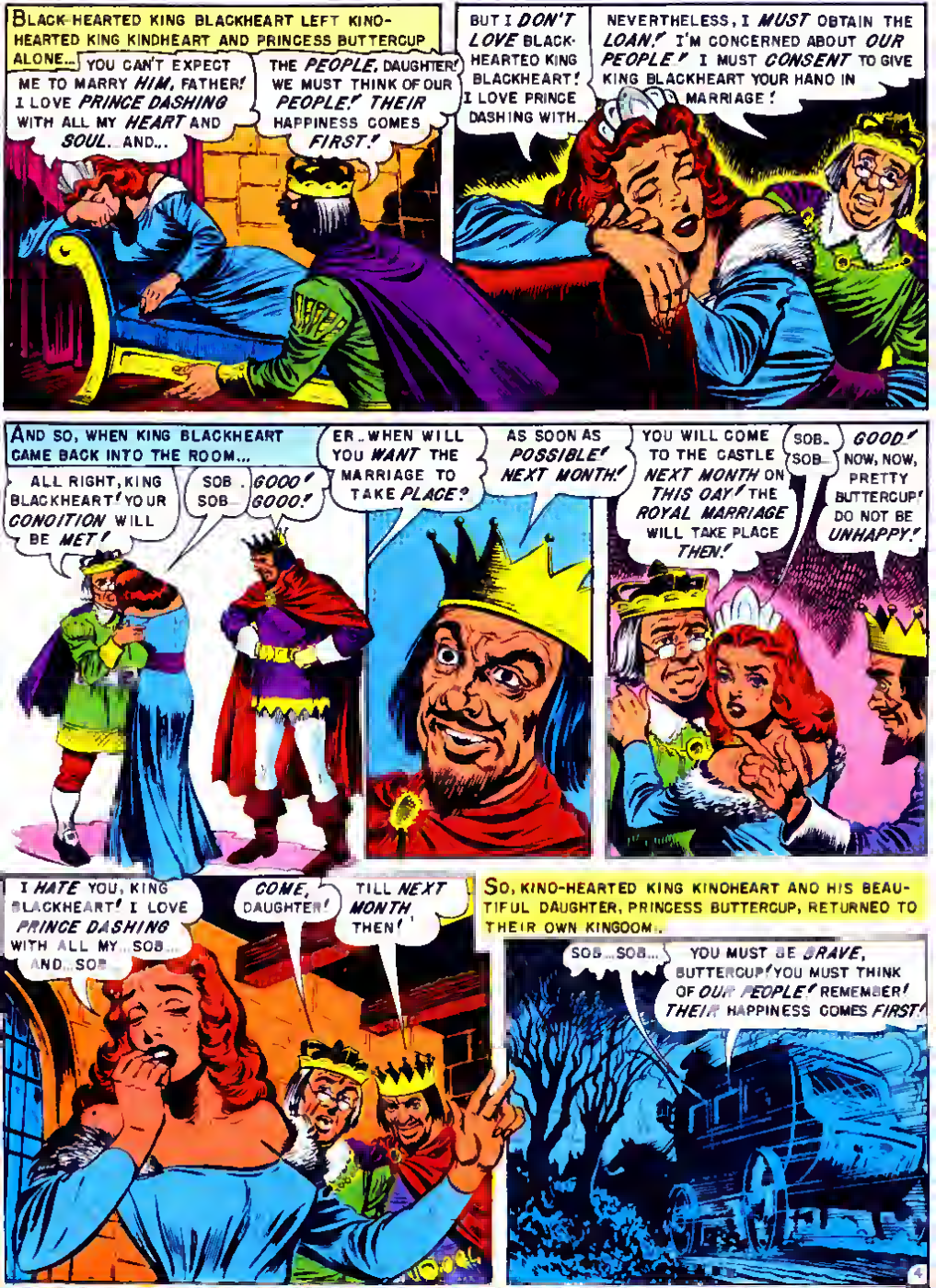
THE OLD WITCH'S GRIM FAIRY TALE!

ONCE UPON A TIME... LONG, LONG AGO... THERE LIVED IN A TINY KINGDOM A *KIND-HEARTED KING* AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER... *PRINCESS BUTTERCUP!* NOW PRINCESS BUTTERCUP WAS *MADLY IN LOVE* WITH A HANDSOME *PRINCE* FROM A *DISTANT KINGDOM*... BUT WHEN SHE ASKED HER FATHER IF SHE COULD *MARRY* HIM, HER KIND-HEARTED FATHER REPLIED...

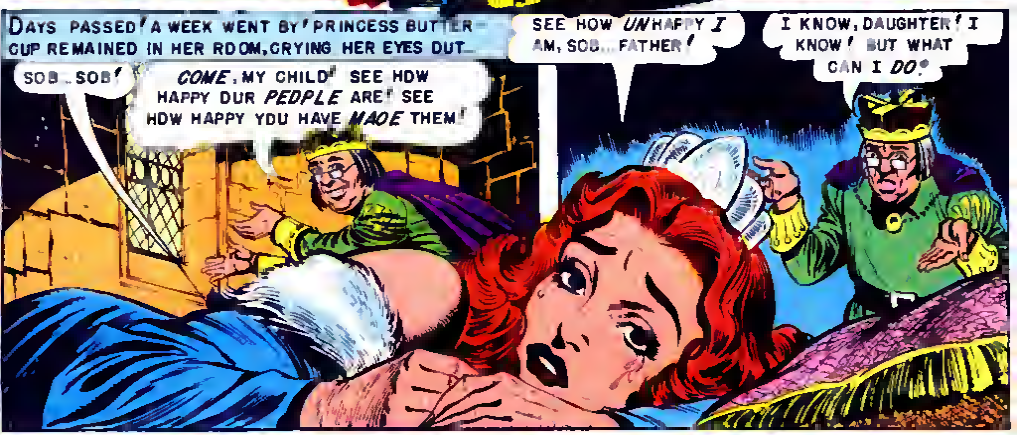


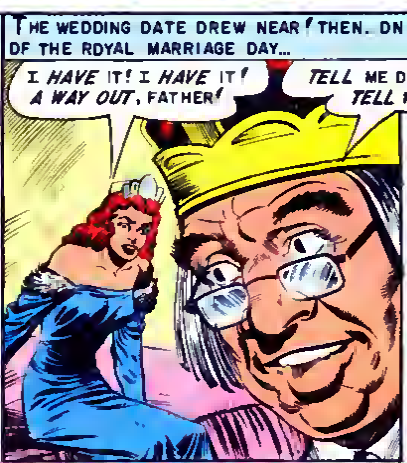

BUT I LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY HEART AND SOUL AND...
I KNOW! I KNOW! BUT UNLESS MY PEOPLE ARE RELIEVED OF THEIR MISERY AND WOE, YOU CANNOT MARRY! WE CANNOT BE HAPPY UNLESS THE POPULACE IS HAPPY!
CAN'T YOU HIRE JESTERS TO GO ARDUND AND MAKE THE PEOPLE HAPPY, FATHER? AFTER ALL, I DO LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY HEART AND..
I CAN'T, BUTTERCUP! THE ROYAL TREASURY IS EMPTY..CLEAN..BUSTED..FLAT...
CAN'T YOU BORROW MONEY, FATHER? I DO LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY...
NEVER! THE ONLY ONE THAT I COULD BORROW MONEY FROM IS KING BLACKHEART... OUR BLACK-HEARTED NEIGHBOR...
UGH! HIM I HATE!
YOU GET THE PICTURE, BUTTERCUP!
AND SO, BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS BUTTERCUP COULD NOT MARRY HANDSOME PRINCE DASHING! AT LEAST NOT UNTIL THE PEOPLE OF HER FATHER'S KINGDOM WERE BETTER OFF AND HAPPY! BUT THE LONGER SHE WAITED, THE WORSE THINGS GOT! THE PEOPLE GOT UNHAPPIER.. AND UNHAPPIER... AND UNHAPPIER.. SOB..
SOB...FATHER! WHAT WILL I DO? I HAVE WAITED... AND WAITED! THE PEOPLE HAVE GOTTEN UNHAPPIER AND UNHAPPIER! AND I DO LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL OF MY HEART AND SOUL...AND FINGERS ...AND TOES!
THIS IS NO LONGER A QUESTION OF YOUR HAPPINESS, MY CHILD! OUR KINGDOM IS IN A CRISIS! IT IS THE PEOPLE I AM THINKING ABOUT!
THE PEOPLE?! BUT WHAT ABOUT POOR LITTLE ME... AND PRINCE DASHING... WHOM I LOVE WITH ALL OF MY HEART AND SOUL...
THE PEOPLE COME FIRST, MY CHILD! IT IS THEIR HAPPINESS YOU MUST BE CONCERNED ABOUT! AFTER THEY ARE HAPPY, THEN YOU CAN BE HAPPY! BUT NOW... THEY STARVE! THEY WALK THE STREETS IN RAGS...

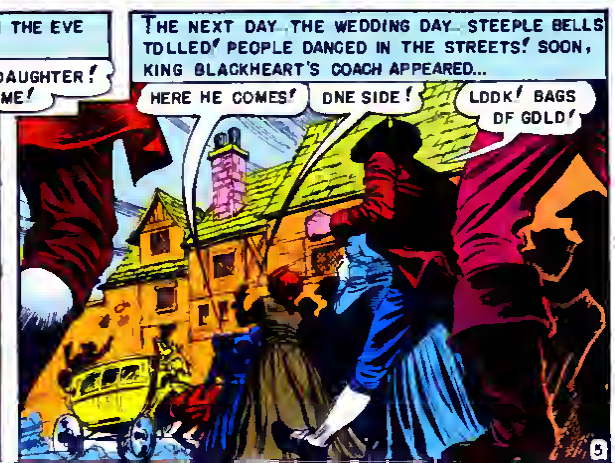
FINALLY THE KIND-HEARTED KING COULD STAND IT NO LONGER! THINGS WERE WORSE THAN EVER! SO ONE DAY...
DAUGHTER, DEAR! I'VE DECIDED TO SWALLOW MY PRIDE! I'VE DECIDED TO ASK OUR BLACK-HEARTED NEIGHBOR, KING BLACKHEART, FOR A LOAN!
OH, DADDY! THEN MAYBE I CAN MARRY PRINCE DASHING, WHOM I LOVE WITH...
YES, DAUGHTER! IF I'M ABLE TO BORROW ENOUGH, AND MY PEOPLE ARE HAPPY... THEN YOU COULD MARRY... ER... WHAT'S HIS NAME?
PRINCE DASHING... WHOM I LOVE WITH ALL OF MY HEART AND SOUL AND...
SO, KIND-HEARTED KING KINDHEART AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, PRINCESS BUTTERCUP, RODE TO THE NEIGHBORING KINGDOM TO SEE BLACK-HEARTED KING BLACKHEART! NOW, KING BLACKHEART HAD NEVER MET PRINCESS BUTTERCUP! HE NEVER KNEW HIS NEIGHBOR HAD SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER!
SO...
SO YOU NEED MONEY, EH, KING KINDHEART? WELL, I THINK A LOAN COULD BE ARRANGED!
YOU DO?
OH, DAOOY!
...ON ONE CONDITION, OF COURSE!
EH? ONE CONDITION?
ANYTHING! ANYTHING!
MY CONDITION, KING KINDHEART, IS THAT YOU GIVE ME YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE!
WHAT? BUT SHE LOVES ANOTHER!
NO! NO!
HEH, HEH! EITHER THAT... YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAND...OR NO LOAN...
NEVER! NEVER!
CAN I SPEAK TO MY DAUGHTER FOR A MINUTE... ALONE?
3


BLACK-HEARTED KING BLACKHEART LEFT KINO-HEARTED KING KINDHEART AND PRINCESS BUTTERCUP ALONE...
YOU CAN'T EXPECT ME TO MARRY HIM, FATHER! I LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY HEART AND SOUL.. AND...
THE PEOPLE, DAUGHTER! WE MUST THINK OF OUR PEOPLE! THEIR HAPPINESS COMES FIRST!
BUT I DON'T LOVE BLACK-HEARTED KING BLACKHEART! I LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH..
NEVERTHELESS, I MUST OBTAIN THE LOAN! I'M CONCERNED ABOUT OUR PEOPLE! I MUST CONSENT TO GIVE KING BLACKHEART YOUR HAND IN MARRIAGE!
AND SO, WHEN KING BLACKHEART CAME BACK INTO THE ROOM...
ALL RIGHT, KING BLACKHEART! YOUR CONDITION WILL BE MET!
SOB.. SOB..
GOOD! GOOD!
ER..WHEN WILL YOU WANT THE MARRIAGE TO TAKE PLACE?
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! NEXT MONTH!
YOU WILL COME TO THE CASTLE NEXT MONTH ON THIS DAY! THE ROYAL MARRIAGE WILL TAKE PLACE THEN!
SOB.. SOB..
GOOD! NOW, NOW, PRETTY BUTTERCUP! DO NOT BE UNHAPPY!
I HATE YOU, KING BLACKHEART! I LOVE PRINCE DASHING WITH ALL MY.. SOB.. AND.. SOB
COME, DAUGHTER!
TILL NEXT MONTH, THEN!
SO, KINO-HEARTED KING KINDHEART AND HIS BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER, PRINCESS BUTTERCUP, RETURNED TO THEIR OWN KINGDOM..
SOB..SOB...
YOU MUST BE BRAVE, BUTTERCUP! YOU MUST THINK OF OUR PEOPLE! REMEMBER! THEIR HAPPINESS COMES FIRST!
4

NEWS OF THE COMING ROYAL MARRIAGE WAS ANNOUNCED THROUGHOUT KIND-HEARTED KING KINDHEART'S KINGDOM...
HEAR YE...HEAR YE! BE IT KNOWN THAT ON TUESDAY, AUGUST FIFTH, GOOD KING BLACKHEART WILL TAKE OUR BELOVED PRINCESS BUTTERCUP'S HAND IN MARRIAGE!
BUT...
BUT WE THOUGHT PRINCESS BUTTERCUP LOVED PRINCE OASHING WITH ALL HER HEART AND SOUL AND FINGERS... AND TOES!
PLEASE! THERE'S MORE! HEAR YE! HEAR YE!
...AND BE IT KNOWN THAT ON THAT DAY, EACH AND EVERY CITIZEN WILL RECEIVE A MEDIUM SIZED BAG OF GOLD...IN CELEBRATION! GOLD, COURTESY OF LOAN BY KING BLACKHEART!
AH! THAT'S THE CATCH!
CRAFTY DEVIL, THAT KING BLACKHEART!


DAYS PASSED! A WEEK WENT BY! PRINCESS BUTTERCUP REMAINED IN HER ROOM, CRYING HER EYES OUT...
SOB...SOB!
COME, MY CHILD! SEE HOW HAPPY OUR PEOPLE ARE! SEE HOW HAPPY YOU HAVE MADE THEM!
SEE HOW UNHAPPY I AM, SOB...FATHER!
I KNOW, DAUGHTER! I KNOW! BUT WHAT CAN I DO?


THE WEDDING DATE DREW NEAR! THEN, ON THE EVE OF THE ROYAL MARRIAGE DAY...
I HAVE IT! I HAVE IT! A WAY OUT, FATHER!
TELL ME DAUGHTER! TELL ME!


THE NEXT DAY...THE WEDDING DAY... STEEPLE BELLS TOLLED! PEOPLE DANCED IN THE STREETS! SOON, KING BLACKHEART'S COACH APPEARED...
HERE HE COMES!
ONE SIDE!
LOOK! BAGS OF GOLD!

THE BAGS OF GOLD WERE DISTRIBUTED TO THE POPULACE...
THERE! THE LAST ONE! NOW, LET'S GET ON WITH THE CEREMONY, KING KINDHEART!
FOLLOW ME, KING BLACKHEART!
KING KINDHEART LED KING BLACKHEART INTO THE CASTLE...
THIS WAY, KING BLACKHEART!
NO TRICKS, KING KINDHEART! I'VE KEPT MY PART OF THE BARGAIN!
...DOWN A LONG DARK CORRIDOR...
AND I WILL KEEP MY PART, KING BLACKHEART! A BARGAIN IS A BARGAIN! IN HERE...
AH! THE CHAPEL!
THE CHAPEL WAS FILLED WITH ROYAL GUESTS! NEAR THE ALTAR STOOD PRINCESS BUTTERCUP! AT HER SIDE STOOD PRINCE DASHING...
WHAT'S THIS, KING KINDHEART? I AM TO HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE... NOT HIM!
THAT'S RIGHT, KING BLACKHEART! THERE'S TO BE A DOUBLE CEREMONY TODAY!
PRINCE DASHING WILL MARRY BUTTERCUP...
WHAT!? BUT...
KING KINDHEART EXTENDED A VELVET PILLOW! KING BLACKHEART STARED AT IT IN SHEER HORROR
...AND YOU... YOU WILL HAVE MY DAUGHTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE!
GOOD LORD!
HEE, HEE! YEP! THEY MADE THE OLD BOY, KING BLACKHEART, GO THROUGH WITH IT, TOO, KIDDIES! AND AFTER THAT, EVERYBODY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER... PRINCE DASHING WITH ONE-ARMED PRINCESS BUTTERCUP... AND BLACK-HEARTED KING BLACKHEART WITH HIS HANDY WIFE! HEE, HEE! AND THAT'S MY FAIRY TALE FOR THIS ISSUE! GRIM? THAT'S WHAT I TOLD YOU! 'BYE, NOW!
6

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HMMPH! *FAIRY TALES!* WHAT *NEXT*? PRETTY SOON THAT OLD HAG WILL BE TELLIN' "FUNNY-LITTLE-ANIMAL" HORROR STORIES! WELL, *NOT ME!* I'M FROM THE *OLD* SCHOOL! *STRAIGHT GORE*... THAT'S *MY LORE!* YEP! IT'S YOUR *CRYPT-KEEPER*, READY TO *DIG UP* ANOTHER *TALE OF TERROR* FROM MY *COLLECTION!* SO SIT DOWN ON THAT *SAMPLE-CASE*, AND I'LL BEGIN THE BLOOD-CURDLER I CALL...

DEATH OF SOME SALESMEN!

YOUR NAME IS *STUART TNATONER!* YOU'RE A SALESMAN... A *TRAVELING SALESMAN!* FOR TWO YEARS NOW YOU'VE BEEN DRIVING THESE BACK-WOODS ROADS, HUSTLING YOUR LINE! YOU GO FROM FARMHOUSE TO FARMHOUSE, MAKING YOUR PITCH! SOMETIMES YOU HAWK A *SALE*...MOSTLY *NOT!* TODAY LOOKS LIKE ONE OF YOUR *BAD* DAYS...

SOME OF THESE BACKWOODS ROADS ARE *SMOOTH*... SOME ARE *PRETTY BAD!* LIKE THE ONE YOU'RE ON NOW! IT'S *MUDDY* AND *RUTTED!* YOUR BEAT-UP OLD CAR ROCKS AND ROLLS! THE SKY ABOVE YOU IS BLEAK AND GREY! YOU CURSE SOFTLY TO YOURSELF...

LOOKS LIKE *RAIN, DRAT IT!* AND HERE I AM IN THE MIDDLE OF *NOWHERE!*

AND THEN IT STARTS COMING DOWN! THE RAIN! IT FLOODS ACROSS YOUR WINDSHIELD... PATTERING LOUDLY ON THE CAR ROOF! YOU CAN HARDLY SEE THE ROAD AHEAD! THE RUTS AND HOLLOWS FILL WITH WATER! YOU BOUNCE ALONG... SPLASHING THROUGH THEM...

WELL, *THIS* DAY IS *SHOT!* I WON'T MAKE ANY MORE SALES IN *THIS* ROTTEN WEATHER! MIGHT AS WELL JUST *KEEP GOIN'* TILL I HIT A *MAIN ROAD*, AND HOLE UP IN A *MOTEL* FOR THE *NIGHT!*

THE RAIN CONTINUES! SUDDENLY YOUR CAR SAGS AWKWARDLY TO THE RIGHT! THE ENGINE COUGHS AND STALLS! YOU'RE OVER YOUR WHEEL HUBS IN A PUDDLE...

OH X*!! *STUCK!* *NOW* WHAT?

YOU SIT THERE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT RAIN-FLOODED MUDDY BACKWOODS ROAD, COUNTING TO TEN! THEN YOU LOOK AROUND...

MUST BE A FARMHOUSE *SOMEWHERE* NEAR HERE! MAYBE THEY CAN PUT ME UP!

YOU PEER THROUGH THE GLOOMY DOWNPOUR! THEN YOU SEE IT! *THE HOUSE!* IT STANDS BLACK AND SOMBER, OUTLINED AGAINST THE GREY SKY...

HEY! WHAT *LUCK!* *THERE'S* A HOUSE... UP ON THAT *HILL!* I'LL MAKE A *BREAK* FOR IT!

YOU LEAP FROM YOUR STALLED AUTO AND START FOR THE HOUSE! THE RAINDROPS SLAM AGAINST YOUR FACE! YOUR CLOTHES BEGIN TO SOP UP THE WETNESS! YOU SPLASH THROUGH THE RAIN-SWELLED PUDDLES

HOPE THEY'VE GOT A *PHONE* SO I CAN CALL IN FOR A *TOW!*

AND THEN YOU'RE ON THE PORCH! THE HOUSE IS OLD AND WEATHERBEATEN! THE SHUTTERS ARE BROKEN AND HANG CRAZILY FROM RUSTED HINGES! THE BLINDS ARE DRAWN! THERE'S NO SIGN OF LIFE! BEHIND YOU, THE RAIN POURS NOISILY OFF THE PORCH ROOF.

LOOKS DESERTED! WELL! I'LL KNOCK ANYWAY...

YOU POUND YOUR FIST ON THE FLIMSY DOOR! THE SOUND ECHOES THROUGH THE HOUSE! FOR A MOMENT ALL IS STILL! SAVE FOR THE RAINDROPS! THEN HEAVY FOOTSTEPS APPROACH! THE DOOR CREAKS OPEN...
YES?
HELLO! I WONDER IF YOU CAN HELP ME! I'M A TRAVELING SALESMAN, AND MY CAR...
THE OLD WOMAN WHO HAS ANSWERED THE DOOR GRINS! SHE STEPS BACK, HER FACE BEAMING.
A SALESMAN! COME IN! COME IN!
MY CAR STALLED DOWN ON THE ROAD! THE WIRES MUST HAVE GOTTEN WET!
THE OLD WOMAN CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND YOU AND CALLS...
EBAN! IT'S A SALESMAN!
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, HENRIETTA!
I WONDER IF YOU PEOPLE HAVE A PHONE!
AN OLD MAN COMES INTO THE ROOM, SMILING WARMLY...
PHONE? NOPE! NO PHONE! SALESMAN, EH?
OH, THAT'S TOO BAD! I THOUGHT I MIGHT CALL IN FOR A TOW! I'M STUCK...DOWN AT THE ROAD!
CAN WE OFFER YOU ANYTHING, MR...MR...
THATCHER. MA'AM! STUART THATCHER! I'M WITH THE JACKSON COMPANY! A... A CUP OF COFFEE WOULD HIT THE SPOT..IF IT WOULDN'T BE TOO MUCH TROUBLE!
COME INTO THE KITCHEN, MR. THATCHER!
NO TROUBLE AT ALL, MR. THATCHER!
YOU FOLLOW THE NICE OLD COUPLE INTO THEIR KITCHEN! YOU LOOK AROUND AND GASP! YOU'RE AMAZED! THAT OLD HOUSE WITH SUCH MODERN APPLIANCES...
MY! YOU CERTAINLY HAVE ALL THE LATEST CONVENIENCES, FOLKS!
OH, YES! YOU SEE, WE'VE HAD SALESMEN VISIT US BEFORE!
TELL 'EM 'BOUT THE FIRST ONE, HENRIETTA! THE ONE THAT SOLD US THE REFRIGERATOR!
THE OLD WOMAN'S FACE DARKENS! SHE STARES AT YOU, WHISPERING HOARSELY...
OH, YES! THE REFRIGERATOR! EBAN AND I'D SAVED FOR YEARS, MR. THATCHER! PUT AWAY EVERY CENT WE COULD MANAGE! WE'D ALWAYS WANTED ONE! THEN THAT SALESMAN CAME...THE ONE THAT SOLD US THAT ONE!
THE DIRTY NO GOOD CROOK!
3

YOU SHIFT UNCOMFORTABLY IN YOUR SEAT, STUART THATCHER! THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THIS OLD COUPLE, BUT YOU CAN'T PUT YOUR FINGER ON IT...
CROOK? WHY?
IT DIDN'T WORK, MR. THATCHER! THE REFRIGERATOR DIDN'T WORK! HE CHEATED US! TOOK OUR LIVES' SAVINGS!
THAT'S TOO BAD! I...I'M SORRY!
THAT'S WHY...FROM THEN ON... WE VOWED THAT IF ANY OTHER SALESMAN TRIED TO SELL US ANYTHING...
...WE'D MAKE SURE IT WORKED FIRST!
THAT'S WISE!
TELL 'IM 'BOUT THE FREEZER, EBAN!
EBAN POINTS TO THE LARGE FROZEN-FOOD LOCKER STANDING NEXT TO THE REFRIGERATOR.
WHEN HE CAME... THE ONE SELLING THE FREEZER...WE MADE SURE IT WORKED!
SHOW 'IM, EBAN!
EBAN FLINGS OPEN THE FREEZER LID! YOU LOOK DOWN! SUDDENLY, YOUR HEART STOPS! A WAVE OF NAUSEA SWEEPS OVER YOU! INSIDE THAT LOCKER IS A FROST-COVERED BLUE-SKINNED BODY...
GOOD LORD!
MADE SURE, ALL RIGHT! TRIED IT OUT ON HIM... THE SALESMAN!
WORKED GOOD! SEE?
YOU LOOK AROUND, FRANTICALLY! THESE PEOPLE ARE MAD! EBAN PATS THE NEW ELECTRIC STOVE...
FELLER THAT COME WITH THIS WAS REAL NICE! BUT THAT FIRST CROOK WAS NICE ALSO! CAN'T TRUST 'EM JUS' 'CAUSE THEY'RE NICE! TRIED THE STOVE OUT, TOO!
OPEN THE OVEN DOOR, MR. THATCHER!
YOU PULL DOWN THE OVEN DOOR... JUST A CRACK! YOU STEP BACK HORRIFIED! THE DOOR FALLS OPEN ALL THE WAY! INSIDE IS A BROWN-CRUSTED WELL-ROASTED CORPSE...
STOVE WORKED GOOD, TOO! SEE!
DON'T GET ANY IDEAS ABOUT RUNNIN', MR. THATCHER! THIS SHOTGUN'S LOADED...
4

YOU TURN FROM THE REVOLTING SIGHT OF THE BROWNED BODY IN THE OVEN AND STARE INTO THE MENACING BARREL OF A SHOT-GUN...
GASP...
SHOW 'IM THE GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK, EBAN! FELLER SHOWED UP TRYIN' TO SELL US ONE OF THEM THINGS ONE DAY!
C'MON!
YOU FOLLOW THE OLD MAN INTO THE HALL! THE CLOCK STANDS THERE TICKING LOUDLY! BEHIND THE GLASS WINDOW, A BODY HANGS.. HEAD DOWN, SWINGING BACK AND FORTH! A PENDULUM. A HUMAN PENDULUM...
GOOD LORD!
WORKS GOOD, EH, MR. THATCHER?
C'MON, MR. THATCHER!
HENRIETTA PRODS YOU WITH THE GUN AND YOU FOLLOW EBAN TO A CLOSET...
FELLER COME ALONG SELLIN' VACUUM CLEANERS!
OPEN UP, EBAN!
THEM VACUUM CLEANERS WORKED GOOD, TOO!
CHOKE...
THE BODY HANGS HEAD DOWN, ITS MOUTH CLOSED AROUND THE FAN-PIPE! ITS FEET ARE HOOKED TO THE HANDLE! A HUMAN VACUUM BAG...
CARE T'SEE HOW GOOD IT CLEANS, MR. THATCHER?
N-NO... TH-THANKS!
HENRIETTA SCOWLS AND POINTS INTO THE LIVING ROOM! EBAN NODS...
TELL 'EM 'BOUT THE CROOK WITH THE TELEVISION SET!
YEP! HE WAS JUST LIKE THAT REFRIGERATOR FELLER! A CROOK!
C'MON!
THE GUN-MUZZLE NUDGES YOU ALONG! YOU MOVE INTO THE LIVING-ROOM AFTER EBAN! THE T.V. CONSOLE MODEL STANDS BEFORE YOU...
DURN THING DIDN'T WORK!
SHOW 'IM, EBAN!

EBAN SWINGS OPEN THE CONSOLE DOORS! A CHARRED WIDE-EYED FACE STARES OUT AT YOU FROM BEHIND THE ESCUTCHEON...
EVERY TIME WE TURN 'ER ON, HE BEGINS TO SMOKE!
SHOW 'EM, EBAN!
NO! N-NEVER MIND!
HE KEPT HOLLERIN' 'BOUT A PICTURE-TUBE! REMEMBER, HENRIETTA?
DIRTY CROOK!
EBAN SHRUGS...
THAT'S ABOUT ALL, MR. THATCHER!
HOW 'BOUT THE CLOTHES-DRYER, EBAN?
EBAN'S FACE BRIGHTENS...
OH, YEAH! THAT! C'MON, MR. THATCHER! FOLLOW ME!
DOWN THE CELLAR!
THE CELLAR STAIRS ARE DARK! THEY CREAK AS YOU GO DOWN...
FELLER SAID IT'D DRY CLOTHES FINE!
THAT ONE WORKED, EBAN!
THAT'S RIGHT, HENRIETTA! IT DID, DIDN'T IT!
THERE IT IS, MR. THATCHER!
EBAN SWINGS OPEN THE CLOTHES-DRYER DOOR! INSIDE, CURLED UP IN THE DRUM, IS A SCORCHED, BLISTERED BODY...
COUGH...
S'MATTER, MR. THATCHER?
DON'T YOU FEEL WELL, MR. THATCHER?

YOU TURN AWAY FROM THE GORY SIGHT! EBAN GRINS AT YOU. . . AN IDIOTIC TOOTHLESS GRIN. . .
BY THE WAY, MR THATCHER! WHERE'S YOUR PRODUCT!
BACK . . IN THE CAR!
DOES IT WORK, MR. THATCHER?
I..I..I DON'T KNOW!
GET IT, EBAN!
EBAN SCURRIES UP THE CELLAR STAIRS! HENRIETTA STANDS, LEERING AT YOU. . . THE GUN POINTED...
WE'LL SOON SEE, MR. THATCHER! WE'LL SEE IF'N IT WORKS!
P-PLEASE! I'LL...I'LL PAY YOU... ANYTHING!
YOU HEAR THE FRONT DOOR SLAM AS EBAN GOES OUT! YOU'RE SCARED, AREN'T YOU, STUART! WHAT CAN YOU DO? THESE PEOPE ARE MANIACS! THEY MEAN BUSINESS...
YOU... YOU DON'T WANT... WHAT I SELL, MA'AM! I... I...
SHUT UP!
THE DOOR SLAMS AGAIN! FOOTSTEPS RESOUND THROUGH THE HOUSE...
NEED HELP, EBAN?
NOPE! I CAN MANAGE!
P-PLEASE!
EBAN COMES DOWN THE STAIRS! HE CARRIES IT UNDER HIS ARM! YOU FEEL DIZZY... SICK! THEIR VOICES SOUND VERY FAR AWAY.
WHAT'S HE SELL, EBAN?
IT'S CALLED MOTHER JACKSON'S LITTLE HOUSE-WIFE HELPER... THE HANDY-DANDY MEAT SLICER!
CHOKE...
HEH, HEH! AND IF YOU'RE LUCKY, STUART, THAT DARN THING YOU'VE BEEN SELLING MAY WORK GOOD! THEY'RE AWFUL MESSY WHEN THEY'RE NOT SHARP! HEH, HEH! THAT'S MY YARN, FANS! HOPE YOU LIKED IT! AND IF ANY OF YOU TRAVELING SALESMAN ARE LOOKIN' IN, AND WANT THE ADDRESS OF A COUPLE OF LIKELY PROSPECTS, I'LL SEND YOU EBAN AND HENRIETTA'S! THEY'D LOVE TO SEE A DEMONSTRATION OF YOUR ARTICLE! 'BYE, NOW! WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY MAG, TALES FROM THE CRYPT!

The
Old Witch